

A K Brett (T)

LETTER

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TO THE

Author of *Lay-Baptism Invalid:*

Wherein the Popish Doctrine of

Lay-Baptism,

Taught in a

SERMON,

Said to have been Preach'd

By the B— of S—,

The 7th of November, 1710.

Is Censur'd and Condemn'd

BY

The Greek Church; The Church of England;
The Reformed Abroad; And even by
our English Presbyterian Sectaries.

Which may be added as an Appendix to a Book
Intitul'd *Sacerdotal Powers*.

LONDON: Printed for Henry Clemens, at the Half-
Moon in St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1711.

LETTER

TO THE

ROYAL SOCIETY

OF LONDON



Presented to the Royal Society of London
at the Anniversary Meeting, 1841

By the Hon. Secy. of the Society

Printed by W. Smith, 10, St. Dunstons, London

SIR,

I Have with great Pleasure and Satisfaction read over your two Excellent Treatises of *Lay-Baptism Invalid*, and *Sacerdotal Powers*, for both which, I think, you justly deserve the Thanks of the Clergy of this Church; and I cannot but take this Opportunity to return mine in particular.

But the occasion of my troubling you at this time, is, because I find you have been attack'd by one who has put out two Sermons under a Great Name, wherein he has positively asserted (as you have cited him in your *Treatises of Sacerdotal Powers*, pag. 114.) that "The Faith of the Trinity gives every Man a Right to Baptize; and that this has been the constant Sense of the Church for above fourteen hundred Years. And that by the Church here he means the whole Catholick Church, is manifest from a Passage going before (which you have also cited, p. 78.) where he says, That "though" the Notion [of

“ the Nullity of unauthoriz’d Lay Baptism] “ once got into some Churches, who
 “ ~~thought that the Baptism of Hereticks was~~
 “ ~~of no Value, and was to be repeated upon~~
 “ ~~their coming into the Church, yet it was~~
 “ ~~solemnly condemned and rejected by all~~
 “ ~~Churches of God, now for above fourteen~~
 “ ~~hundred Years.~~ One would think, a Man
 would not so confidently assert such a Position
 as this, without giving some Proof of it,
 and yet it seems he has not done it. But
 I am satisfied, the Reason is, because he
 could not. For all the Churches of God
 have been far from *condemning and rejecting*
this Notion that, except the Church of Rome,
 I believe, all the Churches of God, have
 solemnly *confirmed and established* it, long
 within the Period he has fixed.

For First (as you have shewn, and Mr.
 Reeves before you, as you ingenuously ac-
 knowledge) two of the most eminent Fa-
 thers of the Greek Church, St. Basil and St.
 Chrysostom, who both lived within the Pe-
 riod that Author insists on, have clearly
 determined in favour of this Notion. But
 not only these Fathers, but the whole Greek
 Church, in a great Patriarchal Synod,
 have done the same. For in the Year,
 1166, Lucas Chrysoberges held a General
 Council of that Church in Trullo, in the
 Imperial Palace at Constantinople, at which
 were

were present three Patriarchs, *Lucas of Constantinople*, *Athanasius of Antioch*, and *Nicephorus of Jerusalem*, together with **Fifty Seven Metropolitans**, besides other Bishops, as *Dr. Cave* informs us, (*Hist. Lit.* Vol. 1. p. 676. Vol. 2. p. 418, 419.) Now in this Synod, as I have it from *Matthew Blastar* (in *Bishop Beveridge's Pandects*, Vol. 2. p. 42.) *Manuel, Bishop of Heraclea* ask'd, *Whether he ought to receive, as one of the Faithful, a Person who had been baptized by a Lay-Man who pretended to be in holy Orders?* Because there was such a Case in his Diocess. And the Synod determined, that such were to be **Rebaptized**. Because the Ministry of Baptism was committed only to Bishops and Priests, according to the 46th and 47th Apostolical Canons. Can this Church then be said to have "solemnly condemned" and rejected this Notion of the Invalidity of Lay-Baptism, for above fourteen hundred Years together, when it so solemnly confirmed it in a General Council of that Church, within six hundred Years past?

Matthew Blastar also himself, who flourished in that Church near two hundred Years after this Council was held, viz. *An. 1335*. testifies this to have been the Sense of that Church in his Time, and says, that "If a Man shall say, that Baptism given by a Lay-Man, ought to be reputed true Baptism,

"tism, he may as well say, that those who are
 "Ordained by a Lay-man, who has feigned
 "himself to be a Bishop, ought to be esteem'd as
 "Clergy-men, after the Fraud has been de-
 "tected, which is absurd. And can we
 think, that a Man so well versed in the
 Canons of that Church, as his book shews
 him to have been, would have said this,
 if that Church had ever "*solemnly condemn-*
 "*ed and rejected*" this Notion before his
 Time? Or at least, would he not have ta-
 ken Notice of such a Decree, and have en-
 deavoured to have evaded it? But he in-
 timates, that the Adversaries to this Doc-
 trine had nothing to object against it, but
 a Story of St. Athanasius, who baptiz'd
 Children whilst he was a Boy, and that
 those who were so baptized, were judg'd
 to have received true Baptism; which Story
 the Learned in general at this time, look
 upon to be false and forged. But Blastar's
 Answer to it is, that "*What is done con-*
 "*trary to the Canons, ought not to be*
 "*drawn into Example.*" Which is an Evi-
 dence, that the Canons of the Greek Church
 in Blastar's time, were against the Validi-
 ty of Lay-Baptism.

You your self also (in your Book of the
Invalidity of Lay-Baptism, Second Edit. p. 113.)
 have, out of Bishop Taylor's *Ductor Dubi-*
tantium, Fourth Edit. p. 638, 639. quoted

a Passage of Simeon of Thessalonica, where he declares, that No Man baptizes, but he that is in holy Orders. Now this Simeon, (as we learn from Mr. Wharton's Appendix to Dr. Cave's Hist. Lit. p. 89.) flourished about the Year, 1410. and died not till 1429. and was a Metropolitan of the Greek Church. So that we may conclude, that till within these 300 Years last past it was not the Sense of that Church, that, "The Faith of the Trinity gives every Man a Right to baptize." And I believe, there is no Authentick Evidence to shew, that the Greeks have to this Day changed their Opinion in this Matter. Here then is one very considerable Part of the Church which has directly condemned within six hundred Years past, that which this Author with so much Assurance has Asserted, to have been the constant Sense of the Church, or as he explains himself, "of all the Churches of God for above fourteen hundred Years." Nor does it appear that this Determination so long ago made in this Matter, has since been repealed or reversed by any Decree or Sentence of that Church.

Let us now examine the Sense of some other Churches in this Case.

The Church of England, (as you have observed in your Discourse of the Invalidity of Lay-Baptism, Second Edit. p. 111.)

has plainly declar'd, that it is none of her Sense, that "*The Faith in the Trinity gives every Man a Right to Baptize.*" For Baptism is a Sacrament according to the declared Sense of this Church; And by the 23d Article of our Religion it is decreed, That it is not Lawful for any Man to take upon him the Office of publick Preaching, or Ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And then by Purging the Rubrick in the Office of Private Baptism, the Church plainly shew'd, that it was not her Sense, that Lay-men could have any Right to administer that Sacrament, even out of the Congregation, or in Private Houses. And to make it evident, that the Reason for altering the Rubrick in the Form of Private Baptism, was because the Church did not think that, The "*Faith of the Trinity gave every Man a Right to Baptize.*" I will give a Short History of the Occasion for making that Alteration, as I have taken it from the *Account of the Conference at Hampton Court, Jan. 14. 1603. printed for Matthew Law, 1604. p. 14, &c.*

"The Ld. Archbishop proceeded to speak
 "of Private Baptism, shewing his Majesty,
 "that the Administration of Baptism by
 "Women and Lay-Persons, was not allow'd
 in

“ in the Practice of the Church, but enqui-
 “ red of by Bishops in their Visitations,
 “ AND CENSURED; neither do the
 “ Words in the Book infer any such mean-
 “ ing; Whereunto the King excepted,
 “ urging and pressing the Words of the
 “ Book, that they could not but intend a
 “ Permission, and suffering Women and
 “ private Persons to Baptize. Here the
 “ Bishop of *Worcester* said, that indeed, the
 “ Words were doubtful, and might be
 “ pressed to that Meaning, but yet it seem-
 “ ed by the contrary Practice of our Church
 “ (Censuring Women in this Case) that the
 “ Compilers of the Book did not so intend
 “ them, and yet propounded them ambi-
 “ guously, because *otherwise* the Book
 “ would not have passed in Parliament.”
 The Bishops of *London* and *Winchester* in-
 deed argued on the other side, and plead-
 ed that Laicks might Baptize in *Cases of*
Necessity, and that the Rubrick plainly gave
 them that Liberty. However, the result
 of the Matter was, that the Rubrick should
 be altered, and the Words *Curate*, or *Lay-*
ful Minister, should be inserted: Which
 was accordingly done. Now it is plain
 from this Conference, that although before
 that time, the Governors of this Church
 seemed to be divided in their Opinions about
 the Right which Lay-Persons might have
 to

to Baptize; yet to prevent such Division, and all Mistakes about the Sense of the Church for the Future, with Relation to this Matter, the Rubrick was altered, and only Clergy-Men permitted to baptize, even in Cases of Necessity. So that howsoever some might understand the Sense of this Church before this Conference, yet from that time to this, it has been the constant, publick and declared Sense of it, That Baptism can Lawfully be administered, even in Cases of Necessity, by no other than a Lawful Minister. So that for these Hundred Years at least, it has not been the Sense of the Church of ENGLAND, that "The Faith of the Trinity gives every Man a Right to baptize."

Now, as to the Reformed Churches beyond Seas, they have in as express a manner as can be, declared that Baptism to be invalid: For in the Book of the Discipline of the Reformed Churches in France, Chap. 11, Can. 1, it is declared, That Baptism administered by an unordained Person is wholly void and null. And we may reasonably suppose, that all the other Reformed Churches, who observe the same Discipline, are of the same Opinion.

You

You have very well observed in your *Invalidity of Lay-Baptism*, p. 65. That, "As
 " for those who pretend to be, but are not,
 " the Lawful Ministers of Christ, 'tis well
 " known that they plead for the Authority
 " of Baptizing upon this very score, that
 " they *esteem* their Ministerial Commission
 " to be of *Divine Right*; and therefore will
 " never suffer their *common People* to Ad-
 " minister Baptism; from whence it fol-
 " lows, that they also in *Practice* confirm
 " this Assertion of the Divine Authority of
 " the Administrator of Baptism; other-
 " wise their claiming the Power of Bapti-
 " zing by virtue of the *supposed Divine*
 " *Right* of their Mission, would be a meer
 " Foolery, and indeed a Contradiction."

You might have added, that this is not
 only confirmed by their *Practice*, but their
Doctrine: For Cartwright the Puritan, (as
 he is cited by Hooker, in his *Ecclesiastical*
Polity, Lib, 5. §. 62.) says, on this Point,
 " Whether he be a Minister or no, dependeth
 " not only the Dignity, but the Being of the
 " Sacrament, so that I take the Baptism
 " of Women to be no more the Holy Sacra-
 " ment of Baptism, than any other Daily or
 " Ordinary Washing of the Child." And
 Hooker shews Cartwright's meaning to be,
 that, They that baptize without a Calling,
 do

do Nothing, be they Women or Men. The Assembly of Divines also, in their Directory, which was published by the Highest Authority which the Presbyterians ever usurped in England, declares, that Baptism is not to be administred in any Case, by any Private Person, but by a Minister of Christ, called to be the Steward of the Mysteries of God. And in the Confession of Faith, chap, 27. Num. 4. Published by the same Assembly, they say, "There be only two Sacraments ordain'd by Christ our Lord, in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord: Neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a Minister of the Word Lawfully ordained."

So that, as I have already observed, I cannot find that any other [real or pretended] Church, besides that of Rome, holds the Opinion which this Author maintains in his Sermon: But are so far from it, that they have every one by some Solemn Act or other, publicly condemned and rejected it. Yet it seems, as you have cited him, pag. 74. (for I have not the Sermons, and therefore depend on your Quotations.) After he has enlarged upon this Topick, and endeavoured to justify the Validity of Lay-Baptism, particularly from the Practice of Midwives in Popish Countries (though at the same time he confesses this to be contrary to an
ob
express

express Rule of the Apostles) he has the Confidence to say, that, "This, [viz. the condemnation of *Lay-Baptism*] is not the only " *step some are making towards Popery*. Was ever any thing so absurd and ridiculous? You and some others have condemned *Lay-Baptism*, a Practice for ought that I can find, *justified by no other Church in the World but the Church of Rome*, and this he calls *making a step towards Popery*: But sure, if any Body is making a Step that way, it is himself; And I think he has made a *large Step* towards it, in maintaining that to be the Sense of the *Church in general*, nay, of " *all* " the Churches of God for above fourteen " *hundred Years*," which so manifestly appears to be the Sense of the *Popish Church only*. Is not this confining the *Catholick Church*, " *all the Churches of God to that* " *Church alone*? And maintaing a *corrupt* " *Tradition* of that Church, concerning the " *Lawfulness of Midwives Baptizing*, e- " *ven against what he acknowledges to be* " an " *express Rule of the Apostles*? But this is not the first Instance of Authors like (*Romish Emisaries*) endeavouring to obtrude the Doctrines of that Church upon us, and at the same time accusing those of *Popery* that oppose them. Though I do not remember to have met with any be-
fore

fore this, who has done it so bare-facedly, as to own the *Doctrine* he maintains to be *Popery*, and against an *express Rule of the Apostles*, at the very same time that he would obtrude it upon us.

And therefore you must give me leave to blame you a little, for only saying, that you "*suspect the Truth of the Title-Page*." It is impossible so good a Man as the B. of S! should charge Men with *making a step towards Popery*, without being able to prove any thing like it. Or that so judicious a Man, should intimate, as if Men were *enclined to Popery*, because they *condemned a Doctrine* which he acknowledges to be a *Doctrine of Popery*, and against an *express Rule of the Apostles*. Neither would one of such great Learning and Skill in Church History as all the World knows his L—p to be, so confidently affirm that to have been the Sense of the Church, nay, of all the Churches of God, for above fourteen hundred Years, which he could not but know had been *condemned* within that Period, by two most eminent Fathers, and by a General Council of the Greek Church, by our own Church at Home, when the Rubrick for private Baptism was altered, above an hundred Years ago, and by the Reformed Churches Abroad. These are demon-

demonstrative Arguments that the B. could not be the Author of those Sermons, whosoever had the confidence to put his Name to them.

I beg your Pardon for giving you this Trouble. But when I read your last Book, and saw what had had been Printed against the Doctrine you maintained, and so strange a Position advanced about the *Sense of the Church* concerning *Lay-Baptism*, I could not forbear to examine whether this was the Sense of any other Church, besides that most corrupt one of *Rome*. And I hoped it might not be unacceptable to you, if I should acquaint you with the Result of my Enquiries. Which if they may be of any service in this Controversy, I shall think my Pains well bestowed. If not, I trust you will however accept this Letter as a Testimony of my Esteem both of your self, and your useful Labours. And I praise God for raising up such of the Laity as your self, and some others to maintain and defend with Learning and Courage, those Spiritual Rights of the Clergy, which I fear some of our own Order are too ready to oppose. That God will preserve you and yours, and enable

enable you to do yet greater Services for his Church, is the hearty Prayer of him who is, though unknown,

S I R,

Your most Faithful,

and most Humble Servant,

Aug. 25. 1721.

Tho. Brett.

6 AP 58